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FOREIGN NEWS ON APPLES

APPLE AND PEAR COMPETITION IN NORTHERN EUROPEAN MARKETS

The principal European markets for American pears and apples are Great Britain, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden. The demand for our fruit in all these markets from year to year, is governed to an important extent by the competition from fruit produced either in these countries or in neighboring regions. American growers and shippers who are interested in what the future holds in the way of a European market for their fruit should by all means look into the character of competition to be expected.

All of our markets in Europe have some home-grown apples. For the most part these apples are on the market during late summer, fall and early winter months and when home crops are plentiful the demand for American apples is cut down appreciably, especially for cheap fruit of the lower grades and poorer varieties. Home production in England, Germany and Holland varies greatly from year to year, but greatly affects demand for outside fruits during the months of August, September, October, November and December. Poor storage facilities cause the fruit to show waste after the first of January, and though plenty of it is on the market after that date, its condition is such as to give the better preserved American fruit a good chance.

The principal sources of apples and pears, other than home-grown fruit, to be found in Northern European markets are shown below. It should be noted that Holland, while a good market for our fruit, is also a surplus producer.

	<u>Apples</u>	<u>Pears</u>
<u>Summer</u>	Australia, New Zealand, Portugal, Holland, France United States	France, Belgium, Holland, Italy, Czechoslovakia, United States
<u>Fall</u>	United States, Canada, Austria, Holland, France, Italy, Czecho- slovakia, Switzerland, Roumania.	United States, Canada, France, Belgium, Italy, Czechoslovakia.
<u>Winter</u>	United States, Canada Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, Italy, Russia, Holland	United States, Canada, France, South Africa
<u>Spring</u>	Australia, New Zealand, United States.	South Africa, Australia.

The most serious competition to American apples and pears is that encountered during the fall and winter months. In Great Britain the most important apple competition is that of home orchards and the Canadian provinces; while in pears French, Belgian and Canadian varieties

are the most serious rivals. The pear competition from the Continent, however, is largely confined to early varieties during the months of August and September.

In Dutch, German and Scandinavian markets competition from Canada is not so formidable, the Jonathan from British Columbia being about the only Canadian apple that makes its appearance beyond the North Sea. In these markets, however, we do encounter large supplies from orchards in Northern Italy, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland and Holland.

At one time, before the war, the shippers in what was the "Austrian Tyrol," but what is now termed the "Upper Adige" and "Trentino" in Italy, held the Scandinavian market in their hands. In recent years, however, they have taken second place to the boxed apples from the Pacific Northwest. Peasant growers in Switzerland used to find profitable markets in Germany, but now complain that markets cannot be found for their surplus apples. Large volumes of Czechoslovakian apples also reach the Northern German markets, while the Dutch apple orchards are almost within sight of the thickly populated coal fields of Westphalia and find there a natural market.

The Nature of Foreign Competition.

With respect to volume, quality and season of production, Canada takes first place among our apple competitors. Methods of producing, packing and marketing apples in Canada are so similar to those employed in the United States that they will receive no comment. A discussion of competition between the orchards of Canada and the United States would be similar to discussing the competition between the states of New York and Virginia. Increases or decreases in production of Canadian orchards for foreign markets is very apt to correspond with production trends in the United States, unless unforeseen developments occur. Geographical location and producing and marketing methods being so similar, it is logical to conclude that the two countries will share any increase or decrease in European demand that may occur, making due allowance for variations hinging upon imperial preference, season of varieties, etc.

Canada unquestionably does have advantages over our apple states in British markets by reason of her membership in the British Commonwealth of Nations. The proposal to spend large sums to popularize Dominion products with British consumers will have a beneficial effect for Canadian orchardists. On the other hand, Canadian varieties of apples do not include sorts needed to fill all British demands late in the winter. Apples from several sources in the United States have a popularity with the consumer and also possess merchandising merits that make it very difficult for Canadian competitors to dislodge them from their position of favor. This situation, however, demands that American producers must strive to improve the standard of their export apples.

The English orchards, next to Canada offer the most serious competition in Great Britain. English apples are sent to market from July to late winter packed in bushel wicker baskets. The varieties suitable for dessert purposes are mostly off the market by January 1st, but cooking apples are available until the spring months. A normal crop of market apples is estimated to be between 8,000,000 and 9,000,000 bushels. England also produces a crop of cider apples slightly in excess of that suitable for marketing as fruit. English commercial apple production is improving and promises to replace some of the cooking apples that are now imported.

Australasia.

Apples from Australia arrive in England late in March, but because of small shipments and immature fruit do not offer severe competition until late April and May. The exportable crop from Australia and New Zealand varies from 2,000,000 to 3,000,000 bushels and prevents high prices for American apples during the spring months. While New Zealand apples are packed in a manner similar to American boxes, the Australian crop is packed in unlabeled, non-bulge boxes, with grading standards that do not compare favorably with our best packs. A small volume of very good American apples, in prime condition, will be absorbed in Great Britain during the spring and early summer months, despite supplies from Australia and New Zealand. The seasonal condition of supplies from the Antipodes, however, will always govern the quantity taken.

The Netherlands.

Dutch apples move largely to German markets, as do some French apples, with smaller quantities to the Scandinavian countries. Very few are exported to England. Both pear and apple production seem to be flourishing and indications are that this competition will increase rather than decrease.

The Dutch orchards are to be found in the vicinity of Utrecht and to the southwest around Arnheim and Nimwegen. Dutch apple orchards, next to the English, are on the best commercial basis of any inspected in Europe. The best varieties are of the Reinette group, some possessing good eating and keeping qualities. The climate, however, does not allow good color and finish. Dutch farmers frequently sell their apples at community auctions, a feature of most fruit producing regions in Holland. The buyers are representatives of distant commission merchants. The fruit is marketed in barrels, boxes and bags, being sold by weight. When sold in boxes they are usually unpacked, the package being similar to an American lug or orchard box.

Both sod and clean tillage are practiced, the former predominating. Trees are trained to high heads and livestock is usually pastured in the orchards. The trees are sprayed for apple scab, Bordeaux mixture and lime sulphur being used.

Outside of England and Holland, European apple and pear culture loses the earmarks of a commercial industry as an American fruit grower recognizes it. In other continental countries the growing of these fruits almost always takes one of two forms - (1) garden culture; (2) field or meadow culture. Peasantry agriculture cannot seem to adapt itself to production in large orchards, specializing in a few fruits.

Czechoslovakia, Switzerland and Italy.

When reference is made in crop reports to "Continental apples", the definite districts that should be called to mind are the Czechoslovakian trees that line the roadsides and cover the fields in beautiful Bohemia, largely on territory in the valley of the River Elbe; the thousands of apple trees that cover the grassy mountain slopes of Switzerland and Bavaria; and the closely planted vines and trees in the fruitful valleys in the Dolomites of Northern Italy. These are the great surplus producing regions of Europe.

Large barges of Czechoslovakian apples are shipped in bulk to German cities, flooding the markets in years of good crops. Plums and pears are also very important and large quantities of the latter are packed in 22 pound baskets and shipped by rail to all of the northern markets, including England.

Czechoslovakian fruit culture is of the field or meadow type with the apple trees interspersed with plums and pears. With the exception of pears the fruit industry, however, has experienced a recession since the World War, and no indications are to be had of increased plantings or revolutionary changes in packing and shipping.

Bulk railroad shipments from Switzerland are of a character similar to those from Bohemia and play their part in German markets. The trees are of both garden and meadow culture and are scattered all over the northern cantons. Surrounding lake Constance, both in Germany and Switzerland, are many apple trees and it is from this source as well as from the vicinity of Zurich that shipments are made in years of heavy crops. The peasants are very slow to take up modern horticultural practices and no immediate change in the status of the industry is anticipated.

Apple growing is well scattered over Italy, but the only production that looms as a serious competition to American apples is that of the Upper Adige region around Bolzano and Merano. During the marketing season this fruit is to be seen in all of the principal markets of the Continent. There are a few cultivated orchards in the region but trees are mostly planted in sod, with a mound spaded up for the application of fertilizer at the base of each tree. Plantings are very irregular and are often interplanted with grapes.

The packing of this fruit is the best to be found in Europe. It is packed in 50 pound boxes. The fruit takes on a splendid finish and for fancy fruitstand trade surpasses our barreled apples.

The Tyrolian apple industry has been comparatively stationary since the World War. New plantings are few but there appears to have been no let-down in the handling of orchards or in the packing of fruit.

Miscellaneous Competitive Production.

Portugese apples arrive in England during mid-summer. The fruit is not of high quality, is packed in large cases containing about 100 pounds of fruit, sells at a low price and does not offer any appreciable competition to American fruit. Conditions in Portugal do not point to any immediate change in the character of this competition.

Russia is again exporting apples to England. The government of Soviet Russia has induced the peasants in Crimea to ship apples in bulk to Moscow where they are packed in cases holding about 40 pounds and reshipped to London. A large assortment of varieties are exported. The fruit is not free from insect and disease injury and does not have the reputation of prime eating quality, but there is no question about its developing a splendid finish. Uniformly clear color in both yellow and red varieties has been observed, the red being as brilliant as when grown in Pacific Northwestern states. These brilliantly colored and well shaped apples from the far away Crimea indicate that potential competition stretches well over the continent of Europe.

Prices realized for Russian apples in England during the winter of 1925-26, however, were not such as to encourage the trade. Packing and grading were poor. The writer has visited and will describe in separate articles the status of the apple industry in Northern Italy, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia and England, which, with Holland, are now considered the most important commercial apple countries in Europe. Pear production in France has also received similar consideration.

Conclusions.

From these notes the American grower and shipper should draw the conclusion that there are many sections in the various countries of Continental Europe, from Portugal to Russia, including the Balkan States, where climatic and soil conditions are ideal for pear and apple culture. Up to the present time, however, various social and political circumstances have prevented the development of commercial orchards as we know them, and transporting and distributing facilities have not been developed or utilized in a manner that has made marketing profitable. But should there be a development toward modern practice in production, preparation for market and storage, along with better distributing and transporting facilities, the potential possibilities for apple and pear production are such as to make the present importation of apples from Canada and the United States economically impossible.

The writer's conclusions are that the present generation of American apple growers need not anticipate a curtailment of their European outlets as a result of the expansion of commercial production in Europe, or the improvement of cultural practices and the use of better marketing methods. It seems inconceivable, however, that future generations, at least in some favored regions, will not gradually develop orchards to replace the present meadow and garden culture of the peasants. If any such development occurs it would be felt first by our barreled apple districts. Until the time, however, that European demands for American boxed apples or very high class barreled apples are affected by the production of its own orchards, we can confidently expect an increase in European imports of American fruit.

European pear production does not threaten our present markets, nor does it promise to check the gradual extension of our outlets across the Atlantic.

Edwin Smith,
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